Ojibwe Immersion Early Literacy

Capstone Project

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By

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Dedication

This publication is dedicated to the gichi-ayaa'aag who are our connection to the past and the aabinoojiinyag of Lac Courte Oreilles who are our hope for the future.

Abstract

The Common Core Standards for Wisconsin provides specific discipline areas in which demonstrate a level of proficiency for all students. This ethnographic study examines how meeting these standards for language arts in reading and writing conflicted with the cultural and social norms in an Ojibwe immersion environment for Anishinaabe early learners of text. The significance of this project was to identify and understand the adaptations that were necessary in order to provide students with the ability to acquire foundational reading skills in a second language where Ojibwe culture is directly embedded. The culturally appropriate adaptations are described in detail through the analysis of data collected. The superimposition of the standards for reading and writing does not acknowledge, nor does it reflect the value system of the Indigenous people whose culture and history are entwined in oral tradition, also where a considerable shortage in literature is prevalent. Suggested research include the careful thought of cultural appropriateness in using traditional storytelling in print and what ethical discussions are necessary to provide Ojibwe immersion schools with language arts curriculum to meet the recent educational standards mandated by state and federal officials while never losing site of the distinct identity of the Anishinaabeg.

Key Words: Anishinaabeg, Anishinaabemowin, Ojibwemowin, Early Literacy, Wisconsin Common Core Standards, and Western Paradigm.

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Chapter One

A detrimentally, ever-diminishing number of first speakers of Ojibwemowin in the United States is the reason there is now a driving and growing movement for Ojibwe language revitalization. As first speakers of Ojibwemowin walk-on to the spirit world, the Ojibwe language goes with them. Although there are approximately 43,000 speakers in North America, only 17 % of them live in the U.S. (Pitawanakwat, 2009). These statistics support the necessity of developing culturally appropriate language immersion education curriculum. Ojibwe immersion programs located in the US state of Wisconsin seek effective curricula that meet each organization's mission in unison with the goals and outcomes of Wisconsin's recently mandated Language Arts Common Core Standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Purpose of the Study

As an American Indian educator at an immersion school whose mission is to create fluent speakers of Ojibwemowin, in this ethnographic study I evaluated the implications of cultural relevancy at an institution where state standards are regularly adapted. The modifications to the standards must be implemented in order to meet the values and educational philosophy of the community the school serves through the medium of Ojibwe language.

The purpose of this study is to describe how the curriculum I create as the teacher functions, as well as what is observed in students' learning of their language and culture while developing literacy skills in an immersion environment in relation to the Wisconsin Common Core Standards (WCCS) for language arts. This curriculum is crucial in helping early immersion students gain the foundational skills and strategies needed for learning to read and write by the end of kindergarten while enhancing Ojibwe language productivity in a Western paradigm. The Ojibwe language is a verb-based oratory language where reading and writing systems are

adopted much later than the origin of the Anishinaabeg. The root of teaching and learning of the Ojibwe is deeply embedded in retelling the unwritten laws of the universe.

Background

Given the historical ethnocide committed by colonizers unto Indigenous peoples across the continents through the means of formal Eurocentric education, the Merriam Report of 1928 describes the devaluing approach used for the delivery in early Euro-American educational framework for teaching Anishinaabe children (Miller, 1929). Unfortunately, this breach in mainstream schools' curricula and approaches for delivery still exists today. As an effort of language renewal, tribal nations have chosen to return to educating our own people through our languages and cultures by using Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy congruent with standardization in the mainstream educational system (Battiste, 2002). This Indigenous-focused approach has many programs creating culturally relevant curriculum that support the mission and philosophy of Indigenous immersion education (McGinnes, 2003). The value of tribal immersion language curriculum is evident with the growing numbers of communities exercising their right to a quality education utilizing the mother-tongue of their people as a method for reversing the effects of colonization (Hermes, & Uran 2006).

When developing curriculum for early learners of Ojibwe in an immersion setting, it is impractical to assume that students enter the educational system as speakers of Ojibwe. It is also an erroneous assumption that translating English reading curriculum verbatim will be effective for Indigenous languages. Of the many Indigenous languages, the three largest Native American language families in the United States and Canada are Algonquin (of which Ojibwemowin is included), Athabaskan, and Iroquoian (Rehling, 2015). Each language family has distinctly unique characteristics that most often cannot accurately transfer to English speaking, reading,

and writing concepts. Consequently many of the methods for teaching English language arts are non-transferable to teaching in Indigenous immersion. The value of identifying and defining linguistic characteristics aligned with literacy skills at each grade level would provide the clarity for teachers to help students achieve intended outcomes of WCCS in Ojibwemowin.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has admirably aligned the National Standards for Learning Languages with the Common Core Standards which require students to be literate, college, and career ready in four strand areas; reading, writing, listening, and speaking while faceting interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational means of communication (2012). For language immersion programs, this alignment reinforces practical immersion methodology. The aim of immersion schools is to create fluency in the second language (L2), in this case Ojibwe, as it would apply to language learning in students' first language (L1), English. Regardless of state mandates, Ojibwe immersion students are being asked to do something that has historically never been done before by Ojibwe people.

Setting

This study took place in a kindergarten immersion educational setting where students are taught through a one-way Anishinaabe language program on a rural northern Wisconsin Ojibwe reservation. The participants in this study, whose first language is English, are of Anishinaabe background. Ojibwemowin is the target language as well as the medium of daily instruction and is culturally based. Although mainstream cultures provide a vast majority of their educational instruction within the four walls of the institution, much of the Ojibwe immersion instruction is based on seasonal activities that take place outdoors.

Assumptions

All the study participants were kindergarten age (5 and 6 year olds), and more than 50% of this student population had no previous Ojibwe immersion experiences within a pre-school setting. It could be assumed that students with no exposure to the target language, formal or informal, may have a considerable amount of difficulty attaining foundational literacy skills in either the L1 or the L2.

It can also be assumed that I, an individual, speak for the Anishinaabe people as a whole where I do not. I am an Anishinaabekwe [Ojibwe woman] who has been required to articulate my ideas and perceptions through a Western scientific process, which inevitably attempts to infiltrate my cultural role among my fellow Anishinaabe. The nature of this Euro-American project superimposes this need to clarify that I am merely describing my experiences based primarily on a formal process that was driven through academia in post-secondary education.

Limitations

Described in this study are some approaches developed for teaching literacy and curriculum for kindergarten in an Ojibwe immersion environment. Curriculum developers and publishers in mainstream schools have the advantage of establishing large teams. They base their conclusions on how language is acquired, transferred, and delivered on a large number of developmental and educational theories widely accepted and endorsed by dominant cultures and applicable to instruction in English. In contrast, Ojibwe language immersion curriculum development is in its infancy, though much has been accomplished over the past decade. Often individual teachers, to meet the needs of their students, accomplish this process.

This study was Eurocentric in its application as it required much of the data to be collected in the form of written works and video of kindergarten students in a classroom setting.

The Anishinaabe life-ways cannot be isolated in such a location only, as everything we do, and who we are is in relation to the universe, the seasons, and our connectedness to our grandmother earth, including all of her natural inhabitants. As each season arrives, and any significant universal phenomenon occurs, there are both logical and spiritual protocols that must be given proper address. Timelines have been extended in order to collect sufficient data for analysis.

It is also imperative that the reader understands that the complexity and use of Anishinaabemowin is very eloquent, descriptive, and far too much is lost in the English translation and that all teaching materials, teaching aids, posters, and text are created in order to implement any given lesson at an Ojibwe immersion school.

Definitions

- Ojibwe: A term used to identify the name of the people and is also the language that is spoken.
- Ojibwemowin: The Ojibwe language in Ojibwe used interchangeably with Anishinaabemowin.
- Anishinaabemowin: The Ojibwe language. Also known as one of the cultural languages spoken by other tribes included in the Algonquin language family that can be understood by one another.
- Anishinaabe(g): The term Anishinaabe is the term used by the Council of the Three Fires (Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi) to identify themselves and also used to describe other Indigenous tribes.
- Indigenous: The people who can trace a long existence in their locale. It is also the term used interchangeably in this study to refer to Ojibwe or Anishinaabe.
- L1: Refers to the first language spoken or first language born into. In this case, English.
- L2: Refers to the second language being acquired. In this case, Ojibwe.
- Immersion: A method of teaching a second language in which the learners' second language (L2) is the medium of classroom instruction. Through this method, learners study subject matter, such as math, science, and social studies, in their L2.

- Target Language: Refers to Ojibwemowin, the language that is used for instruction and language solicited from students.
- Western Paradigm: A framework that contains commonly accepted views of dominant cultures in the Western hemisphere regarding their values within institutional settings.
- Adizookaanag: Oratory stories which tell us (Anishinaabeg) how things came to be the way they are today, also reminding us of how we should behave or not.

Summary

This formal study examined the implementation of reading and writing curricula I created for kindergarten in an Ojibwe immersion setting, focused specifically on how students met or exceeded Wisconsin's Common Core Print Concepts and Phonological Awareness. It described a process and the techniques used to assist kindergarten students in the acquisition of foundational skills and strategies necessary for beginning readers and writers in a second language: Ojibwemowin.

This ethnographic study was based on my experience and knowledge as a second language learner of Ojibwemowin who has taught both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten in an Ojibwe immersion environment. Approximately fifteen years of involvement with Ojibwemowin revitalization and nine years of work in the field of immersion education fostered a compelling desire to study the types of cultural adaptations implemented through Ojibwe immersion experiences for early primary education students. Although Ojibwemowin is the first language of my ancestors, I am a second language learner who has found serving in this capacity both personally rewarding and challenging. This study is a minor contribution to the sacrifices and commitment our elders have made for the survival of the Anishinaabeg.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In the creation and implementation of Ojibwe language arts curriculum for kindergarten, there are several considerations of immersion education. The dominate themes in this literature review are the history which led to language revitalizing, cultural relevancy as a method of best practices to encourage and promote language learning, and applying the Common Core Standards in an immersion environment while establishing foundational reading skills among early second language learners. This review first describes these themes, the necessity for the development of culturally relevant curricula through immersion education, and finally, describes the current thinking on language acquisition of early learners and pedagogical strategies for teaching literacy in a second language.

Critical History

Our most challenging barrier today is the preconceived notion that Indigenous students can be effectively reached through Western methodologies and epistemologies. This approach has not only proven to be ineffective, it has been extremely detrimental. Native students are in need of decolonized experiences utilizing culturally appropriate curricula to reverse the damage done as a result of earlier approaches, policies, and strategies used to assimilate Indigenous peoples of North America. According to the American Indian Education Foundation (2004), one of the first and well-known Indian education programs designed to instill the dominant society's values upon Native Americans was the infamous Carlisle School in Pennsylvania founded by Colonel Henry Pratt in 1879.

The Colonel's goal of complete assimilation into Western culture focused primarily on destroying the languages of Native peoples. These historical methods and teaching strategies

were designed with the intention of annihilating hereditary identity. This was accomplished through the use of extremely abusive corporal punishment applied when children spoke their cultural languages. Pratt's strategy proved to be effective in eliminating Native languages of North America nearly to the point of extinction and was truly destructive for all American Indian communities, as described in the Merriam Report (Miller, 1928). Today, cultural language immersion efforts are being implemented to help restore languages on the brink of extinction. This endeavor is not an attempt to ease the consciences' of the colonizers of their role in Indigenous genocide, but rather is an invaluable instrument intended to enhance the repatriation of Native lands and life-ways.

Teaching Indigenous students their cultures, as well as academics, through the medium of their own languages presents challenges not otherwise known unless one is working in the trenches of immersion education. Simple tasks such as beginning an activity or reading a story for enjoyment becomes a magnified evaluation of what exactly the language objective(s) will be, what materials are needed to introduce new vocabulary and concepts, researching and locating the language from elders or other resources, and creating the materials prior to implementation. The intensified planning and calculated curricular mapping requires the educator to be rigorous both academically and linguistically while being realistic about the amount of instruction time used and needed to deliver any given lesson in a second language.

The curriculum implemented in an immersion setting cannot be that of a literal translation from English to the targeted Native language as each language has its own set of values, linguistic characteristics, and inherent meaning which require scaffolding, and of course, the consideration that language and culture are interdependent. Therefore the curriculum must

be created. The luxury of purchasing curriculum does not exist in Ojibwe immersion classrooms.

Preparing a Trail for Others

In contemporary New Zealand, many Maori people were formally trained in Eurocentric institutions. Thus they could no longer be dismissed as primitive and began speaking out about the disconnected approaches that were being used to teach Native children. The efforts to raise awareness and reclaim education, the birth rite for Natives, began in the mid 1970's. For example, the government of New Zealand finally acknowledged the detrimental effects that colonization and assimilation had on the Maori. This occurred when the government sought to be inclusive of the growing population of Indigenous students in the public schools. Rau (2005) noted that the Maori people of New Zealand stood up for their treaty rights known as the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which essentially founded the nation. This Maori action initiated change in their educational policies, thus making a pathway and place for the birth of total language immersion programming, an exercise of educational autonomy. In fact, significant Maori commitment to their language and culture was demonstrated by operating their language immersion schools under private funding regardless of the overrepresentation of low-socioeconomic groups revealed in the occupational index table at the time. It was not until 1989, when the Maori were incorporated into the state educational system under the Education Amendment Act, that state funding was allowed for language revitalization efforts (Rau, 2005).

While the Maori commenced a revival of their inherent right to educational sovereignty in New Zealand, the Hawaiians were observing closely, as they too had begun to exercise their educational sovereignty. The Hawaiian language was given official status in the state constitution and given special promotion in 1978. The Aha Punana Leo Hawaiian Language

Immersion Preschool was opened in 1984, engaging the youth with elders in language revitalization efforts. This subsequently led parents, families, and educators to lobby for an amendment on Hawaiian statutes, with regard to the Hawaiian language to be the medium of education in the public school system in 1987 (Hawaii State of Education, 2015).

Since these groundbreaking advances in Indigenous education were made, others shadowed such practices. Some nations that did so were the Mohawk in New York State, the Navajo of Forte Defiance in Arizona, and the Blackfeet of Browning, Montana (CAL, 2015). Another nation that embarked upon this endeavor is in Northern Wisconsin. Waadookodaading, an Ojibwe immersion school located on the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation opened in the year 2000. It was the first Ojibwe immersion school to open in the United States. It has operated as a public charter school until the recent unprecedented move to become a Bureau of Indian Education contract school, an endeavor to reclaim educational sovereignty for Lac Courte Oreilles, one of the Lake Superior Bands of Ojibwe (Waadookodaading Saved, 2015). Though Ojibwe language revitalization efforts have been ongoing for approximately twenty years now, only recently has there been significant national recognition from U.S. Senators to help meet the challenges in dual language programming.

Cultural Relevancy

Quality Indigenous education can be attained by teaching subject matter through cultural episteme of tribal languages. Culture is in the language, and one cannot be implemented without the other. Therefore, cultural knowledge alone does not equal sound curriculum. Cultural language must be utilized as the pathway of our secular existence as Anishinaabe people to ensure that Indigenous knowledge is given to future generations. Provided that these types of

programs are put into place, Anishinaabe students will perform considerably better academically than those students who are being taught with the traditional Western methods (Treuer, 2012).

In order to increase educational achievement and exhibit significance for Anishinaabe students, there must be effective language immersion programs that support their perceptual learning styles in addition to their Indigenous epistemologies. Given all these considerations, it is essential to create educational programs that support reversing the effects of colonization through the tribal communities' ambitions to be self-determined through cultural languages, as they are intricately entwined. There should be considerable attention and support given even if the community is small in number. It is very possible that the (small) group realizes the masked effects of colonization on the children who hold the future in their hands, where others do not. Reversing the damage done through colonization will only enhance social, political, and educational experiences for all in a positive way, especially for those who have experienced marginalization that occurred as a result of colonization.

Battiste (2002) indicated how deconstructing historical colonization is a process that plays a pivotal role in the strengthening of a tribal nation, acknowledging sovereignty and self-determination through cultural teachings and Indigenous epistemology. As many Indigenous people return to our reserves after generations of assimilation, we have to relearn what our ancestors did long ago in order to live in harmony and balance among the creatures of the earth. This knowledge is encapsulated in our ancestral languages. There are those too, that never left the reservation who are impacted by this realm of assimilation.

Dr. Marie Battiste (2002) composed a powerful message in her literature review making recommendations for the National Working Group on Education, the Minister of Indian Affairs, and Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada. She stated,

> Language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous languages and their symbolic, verbal, and unconscious orders structure Indigenous knowledge; therefore, educators cannot stand outside of Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous knowledge. Where Indigenous knowledge survives, it is transmitted through Aboriginal languages (p. 17).

More and more studies of language preservation and revitalization efforts are being launched to help keep the cultures of Indigenous languages alive.

Francis Harney (1999), project coordinator of the Tewa Language Restoration Project in San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico, says, "Without a language, you don't have a culture, tradition, or identity. This is what we need our children to know…Identity comes from the language, and that's where your respect comes from" (p. 6). These words of wisdom ring loudly for many who are working diligently to keep the language of our ancestors alive and for those who care to share in the struggle. Often it is assumed that American Indian and Alaskan Natives share the same culture, when in fact each tribe has its own cultural language, which presents a separate identity from others not of the same language group.

The vast majority of indigenous languages of North America are in grave peril. David H. DeJong cites (1998),

> In Native North America (USA and Canada) there were [well] over 300 distinct languages prior to European arrival…In the United States, there are 175 indigenous languages alive and in Canada there are 35…More ominous, 32 native languages have 10 or fewer speakers and are in critical danger of becoming extinct within the next few years (p.1).

These numbers are devastating. This language loss will have devastating impacts on Anishinaabe communities. However, a positive outcome can be gleaned from the information given. In many cases there is time to remedy the situation. The data presented here is exceptional when the reader understands exactly what the term *alive* means. Krauss (1996) provided the insight that no matter the number of speakers there are of any given language, whether there are 100 speakers or 1000 speakers, the language is considered to be alive if it is being used to communicate by people under the age of fifty. There is great hope for Indigenous languages of the Americas, provided the commitment to children involves a substantial amount of resources, hard work, and positive energy.

Promoting Language Learning

Experts from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in Albuquerque, New Mexico gave advice for language restoration that emphasized getting the community involved, utilizing outside resources, and developing a strong sense of community (Fuentes, 1999). Passionate immersion educators recognize that even beyond the healing aspects of experiencing Anishinaabe culture and life-ways through Ojibwemowin, there are also positive practical affects and effects. In a strongly constructive way, Indigenous languages are powerful symbols of self-determination and sovereignty for tribal communities in the United States (Morgan, 2005).

Asserting the need for Ojibwe immersion curriculum and making materials available for the support of Ojibwe language immersion programs are steps toward ensuring that Ojibwe Nations will be able to maintain tribal status among our alliances. Empowering people with knowledge is a noble process, however, empowering a nation takes the success of many programs that focus on creating speakers and restoring the language to its essential place as the driving force within all community functions through daily use (Fuentes, 1999). True cultural

competency and Indigenous knowledge are not just cultural products or practices, but rather, significant cultural perspectives that are essential to our tribal national identities.

Oftentimes Anishinaabe communities are dealing with language shift, which refers to the change between speaking their first language that does not define their identity, to the second that does. This shift presents an opportunity to help restore the negative effects assimilation has in a formal educational setting. Lawrence Berlin (2000) says,

> "…schools can play a pivotal role in reversing language shift by addressing the circumstances specific to second language learning. Awareness of SLAT [Second Language Acquisition and Teaching] theory can help teachers understand the development and cognitive processes that make learning a second language different from the first [language]" (p.1).

The speaking of a Native mother tongue is congruent to culture, and the epistemology of culture through language is essential for student success. Rather than teach students their cultures through Western methodology and techniques, it is far more effective to use their cultural languages to teach them their cultures (Treuer, 2012).

Wisconsin Common Core Standards

Immersion educators recognize that the responsibility of teaching foundational literacy skills is necessary for accessing all learning, which rests upon elementary classroom teachers. Students develop content knowledge as it is entrenched in literacy, oratory tradition, and linguistic analysis. These skills are specific to language arts as stated in WCCS. Thinking critically and the delivery of knowledge are anchored in literacy and are nurtured in the early school years where learning through positive experiences solidifies the intrinsic desire to be lifelong learners.

The kindergarten through fifth grade Wisconsin Common Core Standards are said to help educators build a ladder of skills and dispositions that lead to accelerated achievement across disciplines and will be included in every content-specific standards document into the future. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI), the skills acquired from implementing WCCS will better prepare students for postsecondary education as well as the workforce by means of disciplinary literacy acquisition. "In Wisconsin, disciplinary literacy is defined as the confluence of content knowledge, experiences, and skills merged with the ability to read, write, listen, speak, think critically, and perform in a way that is meaningful within the context of a given field" (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011). The adoption of the WCCS was an effort led by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is known globally for its dedication to professional development and expertise on teaching and learning world languages. ACTFL has exquisitely aligned the Common Core Standards with the National Standards for Learning Languages by the Communication Standards. The guidelines for teaching focus on using interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational modalities while meeting four additional goals of learning languages-cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. This alignment addresses students' academic and linguistic capacities of those who have already established foundational skills. The gap in the literature for meeting Common Core Standards while teaching in a second language for early elementary is evident, as not much has yet been written on these recent mandates.

Although the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is renowned for its innovative Student Oral Proficiency Assessment/Early Language Listening Oral Proficiency Assessment

(SOPA/ELLOPA), the areas of evaluation exclude literacy as a part of the instrument for measuring proficiency. This is a fair and logical consideration for determining language fluency because the developmental stages of literacy for elementary students would be categorized as novice. It would be inappropriate to measure the discipline of literacy when L2 production and L2 comprehension are the aim (Malone, 2011). The SOPA/ELLOPA language assessment tool is designed to allow the second language learner to exhibit the highest level of proficiency using hands-on activities. These activities allow the interviewers and the students to interact through the medium of the target language with special attention given to grammar use, vocabulary, listening, and comprehension skills that are then rated (CAL, 2015).

Essential Ojibwe Curriculum Development

Increased widespread awareness of the need for Ojibwe immersion curriculum and its imperativeness for language revitalization requires more than a fundamental understanding of what it takes to be an immersion educator (Fishman, 1993). The curriculum and its design are as unique and essential as the support and commitment required of the community in which it will thrive (King, 2001; McCarty & Watahomigie, 1998; Murphy, 2012). McInnes (2013) describes the vibrant purpose and benefits of immersion education and the requirement to possess above average commitment than that of a mainstream educator. Based on McInnes' study, cultural competence, Indigenous knowledge, teaching skills, and language accuracy (including translations, pronunciation, and meaning), are some of the physiognomies that make up an Ojibwe immersion environment. These characteristics are revealing to the integrity, cultural knowledge, language proficiency, and creativity it takes to be an immersion educator. The focus of his work was writing about the thoughts, feelings, understandings, and perceptions of the practices of Ojibwe immersion educators' experiences.

The current deficiency in curriculum for Indigenous immersion education is the primary reason this type of curricula needs to be designed and made available for implementation. While there is a significant amount of Western pedagogical concepts and research that focus on monolingual language and literacy development that are sadly incongruent with Indigenous epistemology, considerations of these studies provide a base understanding of what centuries of researchers know about language acquisition and literacy development.

All children acquire language in the same way, regardless of what language they use or the number of languages they use. Acquiring a language begins in the womb as babies in utero can hear linguistic sounds of their native language within the environment of the mother. Studies revealed that babies preferred the sound of their mother's voice rather than others (DeCasper and Fifer, 1980). It is similar to learning to play a game. Children must learn the rules of the language game, for example how to articulate words and how to put them together in ways that are acceptable to the people around them. In order to understand child language acquisition, we need to keep two very important things in mind: First, children do not use language like adults, because children are not adults and second, acquiring language is a gradual, lengthy process, and one that involves numerous apparent errors. Some researchers believe that children will make "errors", when in fact, they are not errors at all, but are a necessary part of the process of language acquisition. That is, they shouldn't be corrected, because the errors will disappear in time (Lightbrown & Spada, 2011).

Early Learners & Pedagogical Strategies for Language Acquisition

Generally human beings, young and old, follow two kinds of learning strategies. The first draws on physical ability and is based on the belief that learning is accomplished in stages (we make sure we can walk before we run). The second draws on intellectual ability, contending

that we generalize from past experience known as schemata (originally theorized by Kant in 1781). These strategies help explain child language acquisition from pronunciation through vocabulary and grammar to skills such as how to hold a conversation. The process is very similar to learning how to read.

Reading skills are like building blocks. To learn to read well, children need the blocks for knowing the sounds of letters and the blocks for knowing the meanings of words (vocabulary), word parts (grammatical markers) and groups of words (overall meaning or semantics). To build these foundations of reading children need effective reading instruction. The two main approaches to teaching reading are phonics and whole language instruction (Weaver, 2002). A phonics approach focuses instruction on learning to associate printed letters and combinations of letters with their corresponding sounds. Phonics instruction gives students strategies to unlock or decode words.

Examples of Phonics:

- "Sounding out" words as a way of figuring out new words. For example, in a phonics lesson, "spoon" would be sounded out as “sp-oo-nn”
- Practice worksheets or exercises on letter sounds, matching pictures with spoken words, short vowel/long vowel or letter of the week

The whole language approach is based on the understanding that reading is finding the meaning in written language. Multiple experiences with words - written and spoken - are what children need to learn meanings of words (Fountas & Pinnell, 1998).

Examples of Whole Language:

- Teaching reading and writing throughout the day in the context of the lesson topics
- Teachers emphasizing storybooks rather than worksheets as well as multiple writing opportunities

Researchers including Nancy Cloud, Fred Genesee, and Else Hamayn have suggested other strategies. They provide specific examples and strategies for implementing enriched education. In their works are details on the skills and strategies for immersion educators to apply in order to be both affective and effective for language revitalization. Paula Denton (2008) describes how the way in which language is used with students, shapes their thoughts, feelings, and experiences as learners. Using positive language reiterates behavioral expectations and gives specific examples for students to be successful in learning situations. Denton suggests using five key strategic principles for teachers to use with students: (1) be direct (2) convey faith in students' abilities and intentions (3) focus on actions, not abstractions (4) keep it brief, and (5) know when to be silent.

Despite implementation of best practices for teaching literacy, some students who have trouble learning to read and need to be taught the specific relationships of letters, words and sounds. Awareness of letter/sound relationships is the main tool good readers use to decode unfamiliar words. Each child needs a different amount of practice to be a fluent reader. Phonics instruction should be based on individual student needs and taught as part of a comprehensive, literature-based reading program that includes teaching reading parts as it relates to the whole language. Creating abundant opportunities for children to read at their own reading levels helps them to learn to read for meaning and enjoy reading as described in Word Matters by Pinnell & Fountas (1998).

The true intended outcome of developing and implementing Ojibwe immersion reading and writing curriculum for early learners is to help children develop solid, overall literacy skills, including a wide range of good vocabulary, knowledge of correct syntax and spelling, reasoning

skills, and inquiry skills in Ojibwemowin by using a combination of both phonics and whole language methods and ideologies best described as part-to whole and whole-to part.

Summary

As indicated earlier, the considerations of immersion education are numerous. The historical events that occurred as an effort to assimilate Native Americans through Western educational means were disturbing to say the least. In many ways, healing is now taking place as a result of Indigenous immersion methodology and epistemology. The Indigenous values, perceptions and understandings of how Indigenous knowledge is acquired, and an awareness of the contributions each individual has to offer are transmitted naturally through tribal languages. Many First Nations people are working diligently to reestablish cultural life-ways through Indigenous languages. These efforts are being done by utilizing best practices for encouraging and promoting language learning through cultural epistemologies while meeting both national and state standards in literacy in a second language. The details reviewed in the literature speak to the necessity for the development of culturally relevant curricula through immersion education and address the current thinking on language acquisition of early learners and pedagogical strategies for teaching literacy in a second language.

Chapter Three

Methodology

As an Ojibwe immersion educator of early elementary students, culturally appropriate curriculum is created, adapted, and implemented daily. The purpose of the study was to describe the development of literacy skills of early learners mandated by WCCS for language arts through the medium of Anishinaabe cultural language. More specifically, I describe the ways in which the culturally based curriculum I create intersects or conflicts with the mandated curriculum of the WCCS in regard to the literacy development of Ojibwe learners in an immersion context. First, this chapter describes the research design. Then setting and participants are considered. Next, I discuss the development of the curriculum, and conclude with a description of the process used to gather and analyze the data.

Research Design

The research design chosen to study student learning of early literacy skills in an Ojibwe immersion classroom was grounded in qualitative research methodology known as ethnography. This method of examination originates from anthropology and sociology where the investigator evaluates the shared patterns of behavior, language, and actions of an intact cultural group over a period of time, in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). This research design is significant for attaining a deeper understanding of how students' learning of foundational reading and writing skills are impacted through the medium of Ojibwe cultural language (Bernhardt, 2003). The study investigated kindergarten students' literacy development in light of the Common Core Standards for literacy implemented in Wisconsin schools. The focus of the study was on the culturally responsive instructional adaptations of the standards that I, as the teacher, make to foster children's literacy learning.

Setting and Participants

All the participants were given pseudonyms in this study that took place in an Ojibwe immersion environment where no English is used to articulate the required grade level ideas or concepts. The subjects were Anishinaabe kindergarten age students enrolled at a Bureau of Indian Education Ojibwe immersion school where I, the principal investigator, have been a nine-year immersion veteran classroom teacher. This school has been in operation over 15 years and currently offers pre-kindergarten through fifth grade where each grade level advances as a cohort. The participants were chosen based on the enrollement of students in the kindergarten classroom and the delegated teaching assignment for the 2014-2015 academic school year. All of the students are Ojibwe and although most students are from the local community, there are some students who travel 80 miles one-way just to attend.

In this Ojibwe immersion educational setting the shared values are those of the Anishinaabeg. The school's mission is to create proficient speakers of the Ojibwe language who will be grounded in local language and cultural practices. The school serves as a community resource for Ojibwe language revitalization while fostering a love for learning in and out of the classroom.

Data Collection

As the principal investigator, I examined how culturally appropriate adaptations of instruction fostered children's literacy learning while meeting the WCCS. Data included daily reflections, field notes, students' written work, and digital recordings of classroom activities. An introduction to Ojibwemowin Language Arts reading and writing curriculum was implemented, and printed work of the student participants was collected. These assignments included completed worksheets that were designed to enhance students' Ojibwe vocabulary and build

their confidence as it utilized their prior knowledge to help them to be successful in speaking, reading, and writing in an immersion setting. The items collected were:

- Letter of the Day Worksheets
- Guided Writing Assignments
- Hands-on Literacy Projects
- Story Maps
- Letter Assessment Tool

The students were introduced to the letters of the alphabet by using large 8½" x 11" illustrated flashcards for each letter of the Ojibwe double-vowel alphabet (A-Zh). The expectation is to daily read the letters and say the sound that each letter shown makes collectively. For example, students would say, *"a" initaagwad, uh, uh, uh* ["a" is heard in a certain way, uh, uh, uh]. Then four verbs were introduced using a different set of flashcards that began with the letter of the day. These flashcards are pictures with the written word attached by Velcro that depicts the meaning of each word. These written words on the cards were pulled off and passed out to four students. These students were then asked to match the written word to the pictures. This activity was repeated until all students had a turn. That concluded large group activities at the carpet. The students were then asked to sit at the tables for individual work.

Each day a guided writing activity began with direct instruction to model how the Letter of the Day is written. After demonstrating how to write the letter four times on the whiteboard, sand-trays were passed out and students wrote the upper and lowercase letter while saying: *"A" mechaag, "a" egaasaag* [big "A", little "a"]. The sand-trays were then collected and the Tracing Letter Worksheet from the Kindergarten Ojibwe Letter Workbook was passed out for students to complete by first writing their name and date at the top, and then tracing the upper

and lowercase letters. The students were then asked to cut and paste the words that begin with the letter being focused on in the appropriate boxes of the worksheet. Upon completion of the worksheet students were asked to retell the words that began with the Letter of the Day.

Upon completion of the set of A through Zh Tracing Worksheets in shared reading and guided writing activities for both large group and individual activities, students were given the same worksheets with no tracing letters inscribed on them. The activities throughout the duration of the second set of Letter Worksheets were slightly altered as the expectation for reading and writing increased as a result of the previous exercises. During large-group work at the carpet, students reviewed the large Ojibwe A-Zh Alphabet Flashcards with the expectation of collectively reading the letters, saying the sound that each letter shown makes, and reading the word that is depicted daily. For example, students would say, *"a" initaagwad, uh, uh, uh, animosh* ["a" is heard in a certain way, uh, uh, uh, dog]. Then the four verb flashcards were reviewed while modeling decoding skills. The letters in the word were covered up with the exception of the first letter making the sound that each letter makes as more letters were revealed. The verb flashcards were then hung up on the word wall.

This guided writing activity began with direct instruction to model four times how the Letter of the Day is written on the whiteboard. After the demonstration on how to write the day's letter, sand-trays were again passed out, and students wrote the upper and lowercase Letter of the Day while saying: *"A" mechaag, "a" egaasaag* [big "A", little "a"]. The sand-trays were then collected and the Non-tracing Letter Worksheet was passed out for students to complete by writing their names and date at the top, and then writing the upper and lowercase letters. The students were then asked to cut and paste the words that begin with the letter being focused on in the appropriate boxes of the worksheet. Upon completion of the worksheet, students made a

letter-book by cutting and assembling the flashcards provided in the Kindergarten Ojibwe Letter Workbook and read the book to another person in the room utilizing the reading strategies illustrated during large group instruction. Copies were taken of students' completed work that allowed me to observe whether or not adaptations for students were effective. The field notes I took on these activities also revealed insights on what affective learning looked like for this kindergarten class.

Prior to reading a book each Friday, a question was asked to allow students to make predictions. Questions were asked after reading the story to check for comprehension. The shared reading activity was followed up with a hands-on activity that had a linguistic phrase, concept, or a cultural value anchored in it. The question asked prior to reading the story was, "What do you think this story is about?" The post-shared reading questions asked were:

- Who wrote the story?
- Who drew the pictures?
- Who were the characters in the story?
- Where did the story take place?
- What happened in the beginning?
- What happened in the middle or what was the problem?
- What happened at the end or what was the problem solved?
- Was our prediction right?
- Why do you think the author wrote/told the story?

Story Maps and copies of the hands-on projects were collected to analyze the reading activities. This allowed me to see exactly what levels of comprehension the students had and areas needed

for further review. The video-recordings of these discussions were also transcribed and examined.

Accompanied by students' written work was a Letter Identification Tool to measure advancement over time. This assessment included all the letters and letter clusters as required to meet the WCCS foundational literacy skills in Ojibwemowin. The data was collected over a period of four months in chronological order of the Ojibwe Double Vowel Alphabet and planned activities. This Ojibwe double vowel writing system is an adaptation of the Roman-based writing system which provides the most consistency for reading and writing in the Ojibwe language. However, only the data from the letter assessment collected during the time of the study was used for analysis.

Additionally, video recordings of classroom activities for teaching language arts were gathered. In order to examine what effective cultural modifications are necessary for Anishinaabe children to successfully attain print concepts and phonological awareness, three key language activities were also video-recorded and transcribed:

- Shared Reading Activities (large-group) where the students read isolated letters/words
- Guided Writing Activities (large-group) where the students read isolated letters/words
- Individual Reading Activities where students used reading strategies to decode words

These video recordings provided rich data of my own language use, student language production, delivery of curriculum content as I solicited L2, and immersion classroom teaching strategies. The video recordings were collected at the end of the introductory language arts curriculum as a method to apply, reinforce, and utilize reading strategies for early learners. Additionally, the teacher reflections made throughout the study revealed insights not otherwise realized during the process. The data collected were analyzed through a systematic evaluation of growth measured

over time for each individual student looking specifically at the challenges and accomplishments made in chronological order in relation to the WCCS.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected for this study was a systematic sequential approach that drew upon two elements to meet the WCCS for decoding words: basic features of print and phonemic skills (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011). The letter worksheets, the letter assessment tool, and video recorded shared reading and individual reading activities were grouped in order to identify the print and phonemic skills the children practiced. Secondly, these data were reviewed again to identify the cultural values and Anishinaabe knowledge in the written work collected. These two layers of analysis were repeated with a second grouping of data: guided writing, hands-on literacy projects, and the story map activities. Patterns across activities were identified in terms of how students' learning of Ojibwemowin was impacted through the implementation of the foundational reading skills in literacy development articulated in the common core standards for literacy. The analysis specifically focused on the intersection of the cultural knowledge and values of Anishinaabe in relation to the identified literacy skills adapted from the WCCS.

Summary

The investigation of the functionality of the created curriculum, and the development of students' literacy skills mandated by WCCS for language arts through the medium of the Ojibwe cultural language requires consciousness of the beliefs of Anishinaabe cultural practices and perceptions. Ojibwe immersion language students are expected to meet WCCS with the oversight of how culture, heredity, and identity are intricately interwoven into everyday tasks required of all early school age learners of literacy.

Chapter Four

Results

In an Ojibwe immersion school where the aim is to cultivate fluency in a second language, I focused on the implications of cultural relevancy in relation to developing foundational reading and writing skills as mandated in two of the WCCS. The focus of this qualitative ethnographic study was to evaluate how Anishinaabe cultural values and modifications converged or diverged with Print Concepts & Phonological Awareness. Modifications were made to the curriculum for the purpose of successful acquisition of these skills through the Ojibwe cultural language.

As a result of this research project vignettes were used to describe the learning that occurred in the routine curricula employed in the kindergarten classroom. In these vignettes I discuss the outcome significant to building foundational skills for early literacy in a second language for Anishinaabe children. Then I will conclude with a summary of the results.

Cultural Insight

The manner in which each activity and lesson delivered was done so in a culturally appropriate way regardless of the content. The Anishinaabeg know and understand that life comes from the direction of the east and we are all headed westward on this path of life, thus ceremonial protocol is followed by doing all activities in a clockwise direction, consistent with the natural progression of life. These cultural values are employed in the classroom and are equally as important as standing when the Star Spangled Banner is heard or when respectful behavior is exhibited while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Beginning activities with the student "*Noongom Naagaaniid* [Leader of the Day]" and progressing in a clockwise motion from there, reinforces cultural leadership roles, spiritual and social behavioral expectations: Spiritual

reverence with *asemaa* [tobacco] when appropriate. Students took pride and enjoyed the role of leadership when given the opportunity to rise to the challenge.

Shared Reading Activities

students read letters and locate letter sounds.

During Shared Reading activities on the carpet, students took turns identifying letters and saying the sounds of the Ojibwe alphabet as illustrated on the 8 ½" x 11" set of flashcards (A-Zh). These letters were written in large D'Nealian style print and included letter clusters such as "ch", "sh", "shk", "sht", and "zh". Most often the students met the targeted skill. In the kindergarten room there is an oval shaped carpet where English Roman letters of the alphabet (A through Z) are illustrated inside colorful blocks around the edge. In the very center of the carpet is a large orange, red, and yellow sun and beautiful blue and white clouds that are numbered (1 through 10) between the sun and the block letters where the large group instruction occurred daily.

Students were seated on the carpet, making sure there was a letter between them and their neighbor on each side. A shared letter reading activity began with the "Leader of the Day" who will be referred to as S1 and subsequent students in numeral succession. S1 begins by saying *"a" initaagwad a, a, a, animosh* [a is heard, uh, uh, uh, dog in Ojibwe]" while gleaming with pride. S2 covers his ears and slumps his shoulders forward as if to say, not this again. All the students are reminded to sit up straight and tall while at the carpet for group work. S2 follows the routine by saying *"b initaagwad ba, ba, ba, bapakine* [b is heard, buh, buh, buh, grasshopper]" in a very unenthusiastic voice. It is now S3's turn to read but she is hiding under her hooded sweatshirt. S3 is asked if anything can be done to help her. S3 indicates that she is cold. All coats and hooded sweatshirts are to be hung upon arrival (a classroom expectation) and

no hats are to be worn in school (a school rule). S3 is reminded of the school rule and is told that she may wear her sweatshirt because she is cold and that I noticed she is a much better listener when she is not wearing the hood on her head. S3 removes her hood and reads, *"ch, initaagwad ch, ch, ch, waasechigan* [ch is heard chi, chi, chi, window]". I praise S3 by saying, *"mii gwayak* [that is right]" and big smile comes over her face. Students are asked if they hear "ch" in the beginning, middle or end of the word, *waasechigan* [window].

The students were able to correlate the sound and location of "ch" with the exception of S7 who said, *"ch imaa niigaan* [ch is in the front]. Immediately, the other students disagreed. S6 said animatedly states, *"Gaawiin! Giishpin 'ch' imaa atemagak niigaan, noondaagwad, chaasechigan* [No! If 'ch' is in front, it would sound like, chaasechigan]!*"* Based on S7's letter knowledge, I believe he really did know the location of "ch" but wanted to create some excitement or controversy among his cohort. As the activity proceeded most students were able to correctly name the letters and the sounds each made. The students could associate letters that either began or ended in the written words, as well as letters located in the middle. This letter recognition exercise was key to raising awareness on the location of the sounds that letters make in text. Once the WCCS skills of letter identification and phonemic awareness were mastered, a new reading concept was introduced.

This same activity was employed and students did successfully engage and attain the set objectives. However, the letter cluster "zhk" is not illustrated in the 8 ½" x 11" set of flashcards (A-Zh). While working at the carpet, I asked students to tell me how "zh" would be heard if we put a "k" at the end of it. With a quiet pause for thought, S9 said, "zh-ook". I then checked with S9's peers by asking, *"mii na gwayak, 'zhk' noondaagwad 'zh-ook'* [Is that right, zhk makes the sound zh-ook]?" S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, and S10 said, *"Mii eta go enitaagwak 'zh-ook'*

giishpin 'oo' naawayi'ii [It is only heard as "zh-ook" if "oo" were in the middle]. S2, S10, and S11 were unsure. Although there is no word in Ojibwe that begins or ends with "zhk", 73% of the students in kindergarten demonstrated WCCS for language arts in this activity: Print Concepts and Phonological Awareness. The students were in disbelief that there was no Ojibwe word with the letter blend "zhk". This piece of knowledge seemed to ignite deeper thinking because S6 said, "*Bimijiwanikwe*, what about *wazhashk* [muskrat]?" I responded by engaging the students in a Guided Writing activity when I asked, *"Aaniin gagwejimiyan? Ozhibii'igedaa da-waabandamang* [What are you asking me? Let's write it and see]. We begin writing by first asking them to tell me what letter we should write when we hear "wa, wa, wa". S9 said, "w!" My response was, *"Mii gwayak* [That is right]!" I then asked, *"Awegonen ge-ozhibii'amang giishpin noondamang 'uh, uh, uh'* [What should we write if we hear, uh, uh, uh]?" S7 said, "a". This shared writing experience concluded by writing, *wazhashk* [muskrat].

capitalizing on acculturation to meet WCCS.

Although all students have schemata, also known as prior knowledge, the extent of it is virtually unknown when students first enter the classroom (Piaget, 1928). Based on widespread Ojibwe language programming where Ojibwe is taught as a second language, it is assumed that students have been exposed to animal names, numbers, and some colors (Hermes, 2005). The participants in this study demonstrated that they were able to recognize lowercase letters and written words commonly used when teaching Ojibwemowin as a subject using names of animals and everyday items found around the home or school. The 1981 theory of "comprehensible input" by Krashen within practical application demonstrated positive effects by how well the students responded and how quickly they engaged in the Ojibwemowin language cues by saying the name of each letter and saying how it is heard using a repetitive rhythmic way, *"a"*

initaagwad uh, uh, uh. Students also used this rhythmic language cue to recall names of letters in other activities when I evaluated their letter knowledge by means of the Letter Identification Tool.

After being equipped with the necessary vocabulary through the use of the illustrated flashcards, students were successful in identifying tools and objects used in the classroom daily. Students' ability to successfully complete routine expectations in the classroom increased. For instance, S4 is a very cooperative student who is observed daydreaming often. It appeared as though he was not listening. When S4 was asked questions about any given large group activity or if requests were made of him, he would just nod his head yes. Initially S4 had difficulty responding to desired tasks. Through the flashcard activities, he was able to learn the word for door [*ishkwaandem]*.

When I asked S4 to close the door to our classroom, he stared at me very agreeable, nodding his head up and down. I then went to the door and said, *"Ishkwaandem izhinikaade yo'ow* [This is a door]". "S4, *Awegonen yo'o* [S4, What is this]?" S4 replies with a vocal intonation used when asking a question in English, *"ishkwaandem* [door]?" I respond by saying, *"Eya, ishkwaandem. Gibaakwa'an ishkwaandem* [Yes, door. Close the door]." while making a motion of closing a door. S4 said, "*Onhhh ishkwaandem* [Ohhh door]!" while smiling and nodding his head. This is an example of having positive affective cultural response while laying out some prerequisites for increased academic performance by providing comprehensible input, using a method called Total Physical Response (TPR) and teaching method for reading step-by-step in an immersion classroom (Asher, 1977). S4's daydreaming during large group work at the carpet was not a signal of incapability. In fact, S4 showed the greatest improvement in his letter knowledge and phonemic awareness while also demonstrating his commitment to the Ojibwe

environment by staying in the target language. He was very rarely observed using English throughout this study.

phonemic awareness.

In one of the digital video recordings, the Ojibwe Double Vowel Orthography Chart was utilized and it was a key instrument used for several purposes: (1) An oral exercise to get our mouths ready for speaking the Ojibwe language. (2) To allow students to create non-sense words while manipulating the chart syllables, and (3) To serve as an introductory and culminating activity in other reading and writing activities. As a culminating activity, singing of the orthography chart took place.

S11 who was "Leader of the Day", used a red stick approximately 7" long to guide the readers along. He begins at the top-far left with the vowels and works his way to the right, following the concept of reading from left-to-right, top-to-bottom. A concept modeled frequently. When S11 skips an entire row, the students become loud and resolute about letting him know. S11 was discouraged and said, *"gaawiin nindoodanziin* [I am not doing it]". S11 was told, *"Gigashkitoon* [you can do it]" as I stood behind him, guiding his hand making the movement pattern with him. S6 said, "*Ningashkitoon* [I can do it]". I responded by saying, *"Eya, gidebwe, ogashkitoon wiin gaye* [Yes, you speak the truth, as he can too]". After three rows of this physical guided movement, S11 was facilitating the shared reading activity on his own.

Observed in the video recording were S11's eyes following along, visibly processing text. Just as we reached the bottom of the chart, he realized he was doing it and lost his place, frustrating him all over again. The students had already moved forward by continuing on with the reading activity. In this moment, I had an ethical call to make on whether or not to repeat the

activity correctly or continue on as S11 has high expectations for himself and is easily discouraged. So I asked S11, *"Gigiizhitaa ina* [Are you done]?" Letting him decide if we were done or not restored his command of the activity. S11 replied by saying, *"Ningiizhitaamin* [We the students, are done]". Although the activity was not completed with precision, it is done so often that I felt it was fine to move on. The affective response of S11 was far more valuable than doing the activity perfectly: it was a cultural response adaptation made in a split second. Students loved reading and singing the orthography chart.

The orthography chart is a multipurpose reading tool used throughout the year to assist students with gaining many reading and speaking skills. Because it is a handmade manipulative, students were able to move the syllables around and create two, three, and four syllable non-sense words. Based on each student's abilities, this particular method allowed for smooth unnoticeable differentiated instruction. S11, S10, and S2 have been identified as students who need more experience with letters and letter sounds based on the Letter Identification Tool. Rather than trying to control all the variables in the kindergarten classroom based on this small group's learning by creating and issuing more worksheets to meet WCCS, a student led activity was facilitated.

This shared reading activity required large amount of large group instruction time but the outcome was very effective. During this large group activity, everyone was seated on the carpet with a letter between each student. Students chose the number of syllables they wished to decode by providing them with choices of two or three syllables. S11 led the activity and chose two syllables and places them on the felt cloth, draped over the write-on wipe-off easel located near the carpet. He chose, "*baa* [bah]" and "*do* (dough)". S11 began by sounding out the letter *b* and *aa* consecutively, "b, ba-ah". I said, *"Howa, geyaabi anokiin* [Wow, keep working]"! S11

continues on by sounding out *d* and *o*, by saying, "d, d, d-o, dough"! *Enya' agindan ezhi-noondaagwakin* [Yes, read all the letter sounds]. S11 reads both syllables, "*baado* [bah-dough]". Everyone celebrated by cheering for S11's accomplishment and S11 is asked to call someone else to come up and have a turn. S11 has gained confidence in his foundational reading skills as he expresses the desire to add more syllables to read again.

letter knowledge application and decoding.

During other shared reading activities following acquisition of letter knowledge and letter awareness, students matched the Velcro attachable/detachable written words to the illustrated verb-based flashcards after practicing decoding skills by covering each word presented and revealing one letter at a time. Decoding activities were modeled and practiced several times. Some students had difficulty initially. However, the decoding skills used consistently, provided the practice necessary for students to gain confidence in their own reading ability. Ninety percent of the kindergarten students recognized simple words and sentences of many labeled illustrations that were presented, (another "step" to unlocking the written language). This reading skill was introduced after students had mastered the sounds that the letters make. Students were asked to think about the sounds that the letters make as they decoded words.

Clearly illustrated pictures were presented to support this skill. Students were told that good readers ask questions in their head while their mouths are saying the sound that each letter makes, and that they also glance at the pictures but they come right back to the letters in the word. Another strategy modeled and encouraged was sounding out the words aloud. These readers sounded out the words aloud and were taught to ask themselves if it sounded right (Does the word match what was illustrated in the picture?). Students used their fingers to guide them

along and help them keep their place while reading. This was modeled daily in large group, and throughout instruction across the curriculum.

integration of whole language.

Students were immersed in whole language skills through storytelling and *rich language* storybooks. Rich language refers to vocabulary and language that is above students' functional need-based language abilities and use of different genres (Fordham Foundation, 2015). Students also collectively read various passages, lyrics to songs, and content related facts as a review of thematic units. In these storytelling and book reading activities students were immersed in Ojibwe heritage values. These concepts were anchored when students participated in hands-on literacy activities. This method was very effective as it fostered a love for reading and storytelling, probed students to think critically about events and purposes of stories, promoted and solicited language use, as it is embedded in Ojibwe cultural values. For example, we read the story of The Three Little Pigs, a story retold to ensure that the fear and hatred toward wolves lives for generations through Euro-American fairytales because early settlers feared the loss of livestock brought to North America (PBS, 2008).

Students were asked to reflect on whether or not wolves are bad and were asked why they thought these stories were being told? S4 raises his hand and waits to be called upon and said, "*Mii wenji nishkaadizid ma'iingan* [Because the wolf is angry]". S5 raised her hand shaking with enthusiasm. I call on her. S5 said, "*Eya' mii wenji bakade* [Yes because he is hungry]". S10 didn't raise his hand but I wanted to know what his thoughts were. S10 said, "prolly because he's bad". S6 chimes in without being called on and said, *"Gaawiin! Gimikwendaan ina Bimijiwanikwe gii-ikido awesiiyag omaa ayaawaad dabwaa niinawind* [No! Remember when the teacher said the animals were here before we were]?" Although the construct of S6's

Ojibwemowin was not grammatically correct, I accepted S6's response. I was looking for deeper meanings and interpretive knowledge on why the students thought the story was written. I did not make corrections in speech nor did I recast in this activity.

S8 raised her hand and waited to be called on. When S8 was given an opportunity to speak, she said, *"Ma'iingan wa'aw Bimijiwanikwe's doodem* [Wolf is the teacher's clan]*"*. I responded by saying, *"Wenda-nibwaakaa a'aw ma'iingan* [Wolf knows a lot, as he is really smart]. *Wenipanad da-amondwaa agiw gookooshag miinawaa bizhikiiwag. Gaawiin miigaazosiiwag agiw chi-mookomaanag awesiinyag* [It's easy to eat pigs and cows as those European animals have no way of fighting]*."* S7 said, "Oh yeah! *Nimikwendaan gii-piidoonaawaag bizhiikiwag* and gookooshag on those *gichi-jiimaanings mewinzha* [I remember they brought the cows and pigs on ships a long time ago]." I said, *"Mii gwayak, ishwaaso-giiziswagiziwag da-dagoshinowaad omaa Anishinaabe-akiing* [It took several moons/months to get to America on a boat]*"*. S1 said, *"Ma'iingan nindinawemaagan* [Wolf is my relative]". I reinforced S1's statement by saying, *"Gidebwe, gidinawemaanaanig agiw ma'iiganag* [You speak the truth, the Wolf is our relative]". I asked the students again, *"Aaniin dash gaa-onji-dibaajimindwaa agiw niswi gookooshag* [Why was the story of the Three Pigs told]?" S9 said, *"Ganabaj…Aaniin ge-ikidoyangiban* to make people be scared of *Ma'iingan* [Maybe…How do we say, to make people scared of the Wolf]?" The students did not see wolves as being bad, and they did indeed need to be respected for their intellect and wolf's role in our Creation Story. Students also identified how the wolf helps to keep balance among the lifecycle and should be especially respected as brother of the Anishinaabeg. These students emerging cultural knowledge was revealed through further classroom discussion and completion of the Story Maps

where the students wrote the name of the story, the author, and drew pictures to illustrate the story setting, characters, and the sequential events that took place in the story.

Hands-on Literacy Projects

embedded values.

Aadizookaanag were retold to the students where Indigenous knowledge and cultural teachings are passed through this storytelling practice. Students were told the story of, *"Esiban* [Racoon]*"* by reading a written version of how he received his mask and markings on his tail. The students were asked questions intermittently to raise their curiosity and to think critically. The questions included, "Why do you think *Wenabozho* [Original Man] and his grandmother gave a wigwam to the two old blind men? What do you think *Esiban* [Racoon] is going to do? Why do you think *Esiban* (Raccoon) did that? Is that a nice thing to do? Who are the grandfathers that Wenabozho (Original Man) speaks of in this story? Do you think Esiban (Racoon) will tell Wenabozho (Original Man) why the old men are fighting? What would be the right thing for *Esiban* [Racoon] to do right now? What do you think *Wenebozho* [Original Man] will do with *Esiban* [Raccoon]? What should *Wenabozho* (Original Man) do? What would you do? Were our predictions correct?" Student responses were recorded through shared writing when they were asked, "What did we learn from this story?" Their answers included, take care of our elders, be kind, share, help one another, and playing tricks on others is not kind. I asked the students to think about what it might be like if we were unable to see. There was a quiet pause before I announced that they get to pick a friend who will wear a blindfold. The classroom became loud with chatter, because they all wanted to participate. The students were paired up to assist their blindfolded partner to the table to construct an *Esiban* [Raccoon] puppet. Students worked together to complete the project. The students were asked to take off the blindfold and

come back to the carpet so their partner could have a turn. S9 said, *"gaawiin niminwendanziin nindanokiiwin* [I don't like my work]". I responded by saying, "come back to the carpet and let's see what happens when your friends do their work."

Upon completion of this activity, students were then asked if they found it hard or easy to do without being able to see. Students were asked, "Do you think picking out clothes to wear to school would be easy or difficult?" Although these activities were not assessments, questions were asked as an informal evaluation of their ability to make inferences and nurture Anishinaabe values. Teaching compassion, one of the virtues of the Ojibwe people was emulated through this simulated controlled setting. Culturally, this Anishinaabe value is embraced through life experiences and observances within Ojibwe societies long ago and even today. This hands-on literacy project was anchored in an Ojibwe phrase, *"Gizhewaadizidaa* [Let's all be kind]". There are many goals and outcomes when using whole language in the immersion classroom, (1) to use and expand student language by introducing or discussing key vocabulary [also known as scaffolding], (2) to associate reading and storytelling with a craft they can hold, (3) using hand to guide along text being read, and (4) anchoring the hands-on literacy project in an Ojibwemowin phrase, concept, or Indigenous value to be spoken in the L2. These students agreed that we should all be kind. As the students put their work in their cubicles S9 was heard saying, "That was fun".

Guided Writing Activities

student worksheets.

The use of Guided Writing activities is an approach to teach students how to write by writing with them. This was done in many different contexts within the daily routine and across the curriculum. An Ojibwe writing curriculum was utilized to teach reading and writing

concepts called *Waadookodaading Mayaajitaajig Ozhibii'iganan A-Zh Gikinoo'amaadi-mazina'igan Gaa-ozhibii'igaadeg Netamising* [Kindergarten Letters A-Zh Teacher Guide for First-writing] and *Waadookodaading Mayaajitaajig Ozhibii'iganan A-Zh Mazina'igan-D'Nealian Ezhibii'igaadeg* [Kindergarten Ojibwe Letter Writing Workbook, D'Nealian Font]. Recommended practice for completing Letter of the Day Worksheets out of the workbook is that the students be first introduced to vocabulary using flash cards so learning can be associated with visuals of things that are relevant to kindergarten students communicating in their L1, English. The flashcards provided in the teacher's manual of this curriculum were hung up in the classroom to make a "word wall" for assisting in the creation of a text-rich environment and were also used as an interactive teaching tool. This curriculum and its implementation were designed to help students recognize the letter(s), retain the sounds that they make, and know the shape of each letter (Waadookodaading Enokiijig, 2008).

After being introduced and provided a review of the language arts vocabulary using flash cards in large-group activities, students completed one of the Guided Writing activities in which they used sand trays and said the letter they wrote. An example would sound like: *"A" mechaag, "a" egaasaag* [Big "A", little "a"]. This technique utilized student tactile modalities for creating a pleasurable experience associated with language and movement (Gardner, 1991). This was a very successful approach as seven of the eleven students were observed writing words and letters independently during their free choice time.

Next they individually applied their letter reading and writing knowledge by completing the (Tracing/Non-tracing) Letter of the Day Worksheets by first writing their name and date at the top. The students were then asked to cut and paste the words that begin with the letter being

focused on in the appropriate boxes of the worksheet. Upon completion of the worksheet students were asked to retell or read the words that began with the Letter of the Day.

izhinikaazowag [identity].

Although the kindergarten students successfully completed the Letter of the Day assignments, there is the exception of a few who were very unmotivated by having to write their name and date before they even began their work. Concluding large group instruction at the carpet and while in transition to the table for individual application of their reading and writing skills, S2 walked to the table in a very pokey manner and said, "Oh, my mom and me went on a road trip, ya know?" I recast his English statement back to him in Ojibwe and then ask, *"Aaniin gaa-izhichigeyeg* [What did you and your family do]?" S2 begins telling me about all the fun he had on his road trip. Listening and acknowledging students' stories and experiences are normal Anishinaabe cultural practices especially at this stage of cognitive development. No matter how big or small people are, they deserve the common decency and respect of being heard. Anishinaabe way of thinking is that we were created with a spirit of equal value and there is much to be learned from our children. Making the call to what extent this should occur, whether or not to accept the verbal communication in the L1 or the L2, and when to do so is the responsibility of the immersion teacher on very frequent occasions throughout the day.

Also, Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning are not confined to the constraints of time where reading, writing, and arithmetic are very linear (Battiste, 2002). I said to S2, *"geyaabi gidaa-anokii...* [Onh, as you should still be working...]" S2 takes his laminated nameplate where his name was written and began bending it and fidgeting around. As S2 made his way to the table, he began talking to S10 and S11 about Patrick Star and *Inini* Crabs (Mr.

Crabs) from the cartoon Sponge Bob Square Pants. These students were reminded to begin their working by writing their name and date at the top of their paper. I have already recognized that S2, S10, and S11 are not motivated to complete their worksheet because the request of writing their names was no simple task. S2 sits down at the table and sighs at the daunting task of writing his name. S2 looks at his nameplate and literally beings to sink in his seat with a look on his face of complete defeat. I walk over to extend support to S2 by telling him what letter to write as I point to it. This kept S2 on task, and in my attempt to encourage him to complete writing his name he said, "Bimijiwanikwe, what if my name was Makwa? Wenipanad da-ozhibii'igeyaan [Teacher, what if my name was Bear? It would be easy for me to write]".

The act of writing their name for this classroom of students varied from having to write anywhere between 6 and 23 letters in each student's name. The initial adaptation made to help them be successful and stay on task was done by naming and pointing to each letter in S2's, S10's, and S11's nameplate. In my heartbreak and determination to find a better way to help my students to meet the outcomes of WCCS of early literacy, reduce anxiety, and foster cultural identity, I created tracing-name strips to glue unto their work. This adaptation was made for all students so that no student was made to feel singled out. Having a choice is empowering for all mankind. Additionally, a discussion on the importance of our Anishinaabe spiritual names, how it came to be that Ojibwe people have them, and how we take care of our names, even in print, occurred. This conversation was a review of content learned earlier about the Ojibwe naming ceremony, which is retold in the Ojibwe Creation Story. The Ojibwe Creation Story is transferred generationally by the means of oral tradition, a natural learning facet for Anishinaabe people.

Letter Assessment Tool

The letter assessment diagnostic tool was created to show gradual student growth over the academic year. The students' progress of letter knowledge was evaluated twice throughout the duration of this study. This diagnostic tool also provided insight on the impact of instructional methods used in the classroom. The letter arrangement in this instrument was significant for interpreting letter knowledge and the sounds that each letter makes, and therefore was presented in such a way that rote memory had no influence on the assessment tool itself. The growth was measured by asking students to name each letter of the Ojibwe alphabet following the conventional reading skills of reading from left-to-right and top-to-bottom. Each dated assessment was color coded to assist in the measurement of student progress over time. Revealed in the raw data, ten of the eleven students made significant advancements.

Summary

The themes that emerged while analyzing how the curriculum functioned and its impact on students' learning is very telling of what we are asking students to recognize and understand. Based on the data collected, cultural methodology is critical and must be applied as students gain foundational reading and writing skills that virtually perpetuate the learners' perception of their own self-worth, confidence, and competency which is essential to promote a love for lifelong-learning. This intrinsic motivation to read for meaning relies heavily on the foundational literacy skills acquired in the early school years.

While considerations were made during the creation of this curriculum, the initial intent was to capitalize on student's L1 to engage and direct their thinking toward Anishinaabe worldview. The English language has a very different value within its own context of use. Thus creating Ojibwe immersion curriculum to meet WCCS within a Western paradigm creates a

number of conflicts in the intended goal of restoring Anishinaabemowin because the values and framework of Ojibwe pedagogy differ greatly.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusions

The principle of this project was to examine how students' learning was impacted by the curriculum I created to meet the WCCS for acquiring Phonological Awareness and Print Concepts in an Ojibwe language immersion kindergarten classroom. The significance of this study was to address how Ojibwemowin pedagogical curriculum functions within a Western paradigm and the implications of such practices. Pursuing the results of my research question, conflicting themes emerged on the drastic differences between Anishinaabe worldview and Western worldview. I will first discuss the significant findings then, I will then discuss the educational implications and make suggestions for future research, and finally, I will share the limitations revealed in this study.

Significant Findings

As an immersion educator I was committed to facilitating reading and writing content to students for attaining foundational literacy skills necessary not only to meet the WCCS, but also to increase their confidence and desire to be lifelong learners while grounded in their culture. While these WCCS skills sets were being delivered, I had to evaluate my pedagogy in the lesson planning, and rigor of the created scope and sequence. I asked myself, is this boring for the students, are my expectations too high, what can I do differently to better engage and promote reading as both important and enjoyable? This type of reflection is the nature of the instructional profession, especially when students' behavioral observations are interpreted as non-motivational at first glance.

As a researcher, I was able to identify specific student and teacher, strengths, challenges, and insights in order to function within a Western paradigm. Most importantly, I was able to

identify the conflict and intersect of two very different worldviews of educational institutionalized hegemony. In the data analysis of the shared reading activities, hands-on literacy projects, and guided writing activities employed, I was able to recognize that the body language and behavior exhibited by the students was not a reflection of my instructional planning at all. The students' behavioral responses were directly related to the Western educational confined schedule of operation where the expectation was to write their Anishinaabe names. This is a task that entails writing anywhere from six to twenty-three letters in order to even begin demonstrating a skill on any given worksheet. To simply write their name is not so uncomplicated, especially if students' fine-motor skills are underdeveloped.

The subtle absorption of Western standardization in the WCCS is eminent as most all people today sleep on a square bed, go to work or school in a square car or a square bus, enter a square room, and begin working on square papers on a square computer at square desk, and look forward to eating square meals; go to bed and wake up to do it all over again. For centuries now, Euro-American culture has been forcing Anishinaabeg to put our round heads into the square tasseled hats of academia, which represent success among our colonizers. The WCCS permeate negative affects on Anishinaabe children as the children relate letter knowledge and phonemic awareness for language arts content and their cultural identity that is encompassed in their Anishinaabe names as the elements of sacredness and spirituality are far removed by the Western norm of writing their name. Superior learning is not all symmetrical, nor is it arrogant as Indigenous existence and sustenance are humbly circular (Battiste, 2002, p. 17).

As Ojibwe cultural values are transmitted orally and Ojibwe spiritual names are deeply rooted in our culture and identity, standard teaching methods of having students write their name prior to completing any given assignment impedes the intrinsic desire to further acquire reading

and writing skills for early learners of text. The ceremony that is conducted when an Anishinaabe name is given invokes all of the universal creation to know and understand just who you are, and your purpose for being here. This very dignified act defines who you are and signifies your place in this world. So when a child is seen at the table with a long face, or is seen exhibiting body posture interpreted as negative just because they must write their name, it must be recognized that meeting WCCS in an Anishinaabe cultural language setting can obstruct the intent of Ojibwe language revitalization efforts for early learners.

This educationally uniform expectation results in destroying the element of pride and dignity embellished in the sacred ceremony given to the Anishinaabe people. When such identity characteristics are prevalent among an Indigenous culture, specific adaptations must be made for the success and best physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual interest of the children in order for Anishinaabe students to be confident in who they are. The adaptability and resiliency demonstrated as a result of this study is an ever-powerful reminder of the strength and courage our ancestors have so valiantly taught us over the years of historical ethnocide and institutional oppression. While these Anishinaabe students' names are often longer than their Euro-American peers whose performance scores are compared to at both state and national levels, these students have demonstrated that it is possible to find balance in both worldviews (Greenwood, 2010, par. 8).

Taking turns, sitting quietly, following rules, and actively engaging in work are not indicative of conflict of Anishinaabe and Western worldviews in relation to the WCCS because these particular behavioral expectations are shared in both cultures. However, the routine, and environment is a direct conflict. The realization of the negative effects that colonization has on the Anishinaabeg through assimilation is very subtle as must be accepted as a form of survival.

This acculturated adaptation to Western educational standards signify the validity of the Merriam Report of 1928 which depicts many of the detriments which still exist in the Western educational paradigm, today (Miller, 1928). To prevent our voices from falling upon deaf ears, it is imperative that Anishinaabeg demonstrate these critical reading and writing analysis skills within Western education institutions. The requirement to be literate in both English and Indigenous languages must be attained in order to be taken seriously or considered competent among Western worldview.

Using language cues is a very useful method for immersion educators among other tools to help develop and expand student language production in the L2. As I utilized these strategies with a student who frequently daydreamed, I was able to see how the WCCS for reading and writing could have had a negative impact if I had not been astute to the knowledge of daydreaming being a human phenomenon used to process complex information (McMillan, Kaufman, & Singer, p. 4, 2013). Often times, daydreaming is misinterpreted as an indication of boredom, disrespect, or learning limitations. In such cases as these, referrals are made in an effort to help students to be successful in school. With patience and carful monitoring of the students' advancements and knowing from experience that each student arrives at decoding text and phonemic awareness skills at different times and the extent of the WCCS skill sets vary with each child. Reading skills for all children do not appear at the equivalent time, even if the students are taught the identical content in the same classroom. Students' measured spans of development to meet the WCCS for literacy were done through many different instructional formal and informal assessments. The raw data revealed that some students made a significant increase in performance.

As a young girl, I observed my relatives telling others to leave a child daydream when they are observed doing so. It has been said that the *manidoog* [spirits] could be communicating with the child during a daydream, validating a thought or perception of the child's role or contribution that they will make to society and perhaps even solidifying their destiny, as the child understands it to be. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction requires that a Response to Intervention (RTI) plan be employed when students exhibit a possible learning disability (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2011, p. 9). This plan is achieved by making a referral for services and is an effort of many skilled professionals within the school to help the students with an academic or behavioral concern based on the inability to demonstrate WCCS. This RTI helped to identify that the daydreaming student was appropriately advancing for his stage of development and that his reading and writing skills did in fact transfer from his L2 into his L1 through diagnostics provided by the school. This is an example of how Anishinaabemowin immersion methodology and Western methodology differ greatly (Battiste, 2002, p. 16). The daydreaming is a challenge in the classroom especially when the educational intent to deliver the newly created, labor-intense curriculum, and the urgency to meet WCCS are at the forefront. The intersect of the instructional intent to deliver WCCS content exists however, the way it is achieved is very distinct among the two worldviews.

The intent of the research project was to examine the impact on students' learning of letter knowledge and phonemic awareness, a WCCS mandate, among early Anishinaabemowin learners in an immersion environment. In order to address the reality of the prevalent acculturation, a result of historical colonization, the kindergarten language arts curriculum was designed to capitalize on it by using the Western concepts, ideologies, and vocabulary to move them toward secular Anishinaabe cultural values encompassed in the language of Ojibwemowin.

I recognize that in order to engage early learners, the curriculum must be connected to concrete conceptions that they can relate to where cultural Anishinaabe knowledge are shared within the delivery as teachable moments reveal themselves. This insight reiterates McInnes' findings that the physiognomies that make up an Ojibwe immersion classroom are significantly reliant on the individual who implements the curriculum (McInnes, 2013, p. 10). Ojibwe immersion educators must possess Anishinaabe values and cultural teachings in order to affectively facilitate WCCS for Anishinaabe children in a Western paradigm.

Educational Implications

Western educational settings require Anishinaabe people to compromise our own natural hierarchy to be in compliance with the Department of Public Instruction teacher licensing in order to stay in operation. This divergence from Anishinaabe values as means of social control while creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning in a second cultural language must be done very methodically and, with careful consideration not undermine the rich value and worth of our elders as well as the children. Therefore, a ceremony is conducted to call upon the educators to do this work with the children. With following Anishinaabe tradition at our school, a ceremony is conducted at the beginning of the year to call upon the educators to do this work with the children. The ceremony spiritually ties and sanctions these efforts while calling for a blessing throughout the academic year.

The idea and methodology of providing direct instruction promoted broadly in the WCCS curriculum is a deviation from Anishinaabe worldview. The ways of acquiring Indigenous knowledge and conveying this knowledge is done so by example, through the act of physically participating in cultural activities, and learning from respected elders (our experts). To be a younger person standing before a classroom of students in the presence of an elder traditionally,

is culturally taboo, unless the elders have enlisted your help. The WDPI and the WCCS superimpose this taboo, as our elders are the backbone of who we are and are the premier facilitators of vital learning. They are our connection of what occurred in the past, which helps us to presently be thinking of the future—*Gidabinoojiinyinaanig* [our children]. Ojibwe immersion teachers must find balance in the honor, privilege, and responsibility of providing grade-level content knowledge from within a Western paradigm to our children while encompassing the value of our dearly beloved elders and Anishinaabe life-ways.

As a recruit of Indigenous immersion education the commitment to the community and the Ojibwe language are set into motion, providing role-modeling and cultural knowledge within an academic environment. In becoming an Indigenous immersion educator, I committed myself to the community and the Ojibwe language, and to become a role model to my students to impart cultural knowledge in an academic environment. The means of and necessity for an immersion educator to navigate and communicate cultural knowledge in an academic environment is illustrated in the way I think about behavior management and maintaining social control in my own classroom.

Among Indigenous immersion educators, it is understood that behavior management and maintaining social control in the classroom are two very different fundamentals. Behavior management is a natural born skill as Anishinaabe namesakes, aunties, uncles, grandfathers, and grandmothers possess the inherent status to address proper behavioral expectations which are done out of love. Anishinaabe behavior management is not driven by a means for social control or dominance. Historically we have already experienced the effects of that methodology through years of cultural dismantling and continuous social control. We also know what it produces: Anishinaabe deconstruct.

Another significant conflict with the WCCS that emerged in the analysis is the current Gregorian standard calendar that the academics are framed in. Rather than responding to the typical 12-month calendar, perhaps establishing Indigenous education to the 13-moons-lunar cycle where each moon is appropriately *named* and identified by what is taking place in nature. Indigenous immersion education and their educators creatively adapt what has currently been presented as a tool for Anishinaabe language restoration; another versatile skill to maintain balance in this fast evolving world. It is in following the natural progression of the seasonal gifts of harvest that the Anishinaabe have survived by first having spiritual acknowledgement of "Who" the Creator is and that we are related to all living beings. Paying homage to our Creator and our ancestors is done through ceremonial rites of passage and other cultural practices that are determined by the universe. Ojibwe people respond to the universe by migrating, gathering, and cultivating Indigenous knowledge from season-to-season as a way of life, rather than ravaging and exploiting the resources just because it can be done.

Recommendations for Future Research

If there is any doubt about how to be caretakers of the Ojibwe language, there are basic teachings from the seven sacred grandfathers that tell us where to begin. These are upheld values that are identified as love, wisdom, respect, honesty, bravery, humility, and truth (Benton, 1980). Compassion is a facet of love and the ability to express it is having empathy for others. This conscious act is done by putting oneself in another's situation, thinking about the other person's feelings and worldviews, while evaluating what should or should not be done. This type of synthesis is the importance of Indigenous immersion education and is nurtured from generation to generation transmitted through the medium of Ojibwemowin. Euro-American institutional culture can benefit greatly from this perspective as oppositional decisions such as

the WCCS are made for all children in the United States. The culture of others is not reflected in the WCCS.

In Ojibwe culture, winter is the time when Aadizookaanag are told and reminds us how to be. These teachings are given at this time because the earth and many animals are asleep. They (the animals) won't be offended nor will they come in so close to hear them being retold. Many of these stories we know to be a part of our Creation Story and are retold to our children as a part of our history, not portrayed or placed in a categories known as fiction, fantasy, folklore, fairytales, or legends that Western education has defined our Creation Story to be, which causes an individual to choose between the two cultures of either assimilation or tradition.

Today, some of these stories have been put into print and should only be used appropriately during the winter. These teachings of the Anishinaabe are the earliest historical form of literature. Thus, consideration and worth of studying the deep structure of Ojibwe language and nuances that standardization imposes upon Indigenous educational framework would shed light on how to best teach Anishinaabe students to read and write in Ojibwe. This careful analysis would bring forward the skill-sets students should be taught at each grade-level as it is embedded in Ojibwe culture. Is using Aadizookaanag to learn to read and write culturally appropriate? Learning to read and write requires the dissection, manipulation, and reconstruction of a language that has already been written. It is imperative for an Indigenous nation whose cultural identity is reliant on the oral tradition of storytelling to engage in this moral, ethical, and empirical consideration. "What does a comprehensive culturally appropriate pre-kindergarten through sixth grade Ojibwe immersion literacy program include or exclude for Anishinaabe students to meet or exceed WCCS?"

Limitations

The most prevalent restriction in this study was and still is the prominent deficiency in available literature to help teach students to read and write in Ojibwe. A very significant and ironic limitation to accomplish this project, were the constraints of time and the procedure. It took nearly sixteen weeks to collect the data for this study as the universe called for a time to collect maple sap to make maple sugar, when initially it was thought to take six to eight weeks. In addition to the time element, the work described here was Eurocentric in its application of methodology, and practicality. The challenges of this formal process attempted to remove me as an Anishinaabekwe [an Ojibwe woman] from the way in which I identify myself, and it tried force me to articulate my individual perceptions on the behalf of all Anishinaabe people. Culturally, I do not possess the status to do so: an absolute cultural conflict for I am not an ambassador.

Also, writing any given letter, on school-lined paper, is a very challenging skill for early text learners. Spatial awareness in writing requires utilization of familiar concrete analogies like, "staying on the road when driving a motor vehicle". Although kindergarten students do not know how to drive a car, they do know that you must stay on the road to be considered a good driver or writer of print. It is essential to provide this visualize placement of letters within the lined-paper to meet students of early-school years' developmental stage (Piaget, 1928). Based on Steven Krashen's 1988 theory of affective filter and comprehensible input where motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety are embodied variables for creating an immersion environment in the L2, the kindergarten students in this study successfully met the Common Core Standards in Wisconsin by also being presented with such parallels where these data were not included.

Summary

The recently mandated WCCS are culturally irrelevant and counterintuitive to Anishinaabe worldview as Indigenous knowledge is encompassed and conveyed through *cognitive apprenticeship* revolving around seasonal harvesting for the sustenance of our people. The theory of cognitive apprenticeship was initiated by Vygotsky in 1925 and modeled by Bandura in 1997 whereas the Anishinaabeg have been teaching, learning, and engineering scientifically from whence Wenebozho was lowered from the sky. Although formal assimilated educational institutions provide an opportunity to use Indigenous language immersion application, the benchmarks and academic expectations neither acknowledge nor represent our Anishinaabe value system and life-ways.

In the evaluation of the cultural efficacy of the curriculum created and designed to meet Ojibwe immersion pedagogy while simultaneously attending to WCCS for reading and writing, I was afforded the ability to deeply understand what it is we asking our students to do. To my knowledge, learning to read and write in Ojibwe formally, through the medium of Anishinaabemowin, has never been done before. With the consideration of the current limitation of available literature to Ojibwe immersion schools, we have much work to do. Through example, our elders have taught us to be fearless and thorough as we embark upon this quest to become “officially educated” in the eyes of dominate society without ever losing sight of who we are. Each step taken to support the efforts to restore our language in a school setting is a movement to be literate in our own heritage and all those who contribute are pioneering a new breed of warriors.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Form

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #1 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.

Study Number: 1412E57961

Principal Investigator: Michelle Haskins

Title(s): Culturally Relevant Curriculum-Ojibwe Immersion

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota HRPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter. This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

For research in schools: Any changes to this research must be approved by the IRB and school district involved before initiation.

If you requested a waiver of consent or documentation of consent and you received this email, approval for the waiver has been granted.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study's expiration date.

Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654. You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at http://eresearch.umn.edu/ to view further details on your study.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

We value your feedback. We have created a short survey that will only take a couple of minutes to complete. The questions are basic, but your responses will provide us with insight regarding what we do well and areas that may need improvement. Thanks in advance for completing the survey. http://tinyurl.com/exempt-survey

Appendix B

Change in Protocol

The IRB has reviewed and acknowledged your change in protocol for the study listed below:

Study Number: 1412E57961

Principal Investigator: Michelle Haskins

Title(s): Culturally Relevant Curriculum-Ojibwe Immersion

Your study was determined previously to be exempt from IRB review in one of the following categories 45 CFR 46.101(b):

#1 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS.

#2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

#3 PUBLIC OFFICIALS; SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

#4 EXISTING DATA; RECORDS REVIEW; PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMENS.

#6 TASTE TESTING AND FOOD QUALITY EVALUATION.

The changes you have proposed do not alter your exempt status. No action is needed at this time

Please do not hesitate to contact the IRB office at 612-626-5654 or irb@umn.edu
if you have any questions.

Appendix C

Consent Form for Study

Waadookodaading
An Ojibwe Language Immersion Charter School
8575N Trepania Rd, Hayward, WI 54843
715-634-8924 ext. 1313 FAX 715-634-6058
www.waadookodaading.org
As Seen On Twin Cities Public Television
Midwest Regional Award Winning Documentary
First Speakers: Restoring the Ojibwe Languag

January 11, 2015

Dear Kindergarten Families,

The commitment you have shown toward your child's education is remarkable. In this shared commitment to enhance your child's learning experiences, I would like to request an opportunity to study the effects of implementing culturally relevant curriculum in the classroom. The study will specifically pertain to Kindergarten literacy skills reflected in WI Common Core mandates.

This study is being conducted as a requirement to attain a Master's of Education Degree at the University of Minnesota. The teacher research being conducted does not change the subject matter your child is being taught. And as the Principal Investigator of this study, I can assure you of your child's confidentiality. Names of the children will NOT be used.

I am requesting your permission to include your child's schoolwork as data to be analyzed for culturally appropriate adaptations in an immersion classroom for American Indian Students (Anishinaabeg). This data collection will only occur with your voluntary consent. At any time, you may withdraw the inclusion of your child's data from this study. Also, not participating will not have any consequence in the class or for the child and parent(s) relationship with the charter school or with the University of Minnesota.

Please feel free contact me or the Academic Advisor at the University of Minnesota who will be overseeing this study, Lynn Brice, via email: lbrice@d.umn.edu or by telephone, (218) 726-6815. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the University of Minnesota Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Your child's participation in this study would be gratefully appreciated and could possibly expand the learning capacities of the many facets to consider in immersion education.

Please sign below if you agree to have your child's data to be included in this study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bimijiwanikwe

Michelle Haskins

P.O. Box 1706

Hayward, WI 54843

I/We grant permission for _____ (child's name) schoolwork to be used as data in the study described above.

Signature: _____

Appendix D

Consent Form for Digital Recordings

Waadookodaading
An Ojibwe Language Immersion Charter School
8575N Trepania Rd, Hayward, WI 54843
715-634-8924 ext. 1313 FAX 715-634-6058
www.waadookodaading.org
As Seen On Twin Cities Public Television
Midwest Regional Award Winning Documentary
First Speakers: Restoring the Ojibwe Language

February 19, 2015

Dear Kindergarten Families,

I have met with my advisor and wish to add video recordings of students engauged in specific Reading activities to further support my study on the effects of implementing culturally relevant curriculum in the Ojibwe immersion classroom. In this endeavor, I am seeking your permission to videorecord teaching methods used to support early literacy skills in the following activities:

- Shared Reading Activities (large-group) where the students read isolated words.
- Cooperative Reading Groups (small-group activities) where students are placed into mixed abilities groups and work together to read and write isolated words.
- Individual Reading Activities where students use reading strategies to decode words.

This data allows me to see the advancements students make that cannot otherwise be known by reading their written works alone. The video recordings collected will be reviewed only by me, they will be password protected/encrypted, and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. These activities are a part of the regular Kindergarten curriculum and your child will not be asked to do anything other than to participate in the regular classroom routine.

Please feel free contact me or the Academic Advisor at the University of Minnesota who will be overseeing this study, Lynn Brice, via email: lbrice@d.umn.edu or by telephone, (218) 726-6815. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the University of Minnesota Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455; (612) 625-1650.

Your child's participation in this aspect of the study would be gratefully appreciated and could possibly expand the learning capacities of the many facets to consider in immersion education.

Please sign below if you agree to have your child's data to be included in this study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bimijiwanikwe

Michelle Haskins

P.O. Box 1706

Hayward, WI 54843

I/We grant permission for _____ (child's name) to be vidoerecorded to be used as data in the study described above.

Signature: _____

Appendix E

Agindaasong Mayaajitaang [Reading in Kindergarten]